

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 L-03 CU-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /085 W
-----250547Z 083430 /20

R 241720Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1944
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 04937

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, IR, UK
SUBJECT: FCO DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN WITH MP'S

REFERENCE: (A) LONDON 2424; (B) LONDON 2985

1. LONG-DELAYED MEETING BETWEEN TOP LEVEL OF FCO AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN TOOK PLACE MARCH 23. MINISTER OF STATE JUDD REPRESENTED FCO IN MEETING WITH FOUR LABOR MP'S, ROBIN COOK, JOHN WATKINSON, ANDREW BENNETT, AND STAN NEWENS. ALSO PRESENT FOR FCO WAS MIDDLE EAST DEPARTMENT HEAD LUCAS, WHO BRIEFED EMBOFF NEXT DAY AS FOLLOWS:

2. THE MP'S BASED THEIR POSITION MOSTLY ON THE RECENT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT (REFTEL A). LUCAS SAID THEY PUT THEIR CASE WELL, AND WERE IN TURN ANSWERED SYMPATHETICALLY AND REALISTICALLY BY JUDD. MP'S SAID A NEW SITUATION HAS DEVELOPED SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER HAS GIVEN A LEAD IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY CONTINUED, THE UK CANNOT CONTINUE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN, WITH WHICH BRITAIN HAS A HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION AND TO WHICH BRITAIN NOW
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SELLS LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE SENSITIVITY OF THE SHAH, THE MP'S CONTENDED THAT THIS ARGUMENT WORKS BOTH WAYS SINCE THE UK HAS A LEVER OVER HIM.
THAT THE UK DOES NOT WISH TO DAMAGE ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH IRAN BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR BRITISH EXPORTS AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK. THE UK MUST BE CARE-

FUL, HAVE SOME "STANDING", AND OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF GOOD EVIDENCE. HE SAID THE UK WOULD WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT ANY ACTION IT TOOK DID NOT MAKE THE SITUATION OF THE DEFENDANTS WORSE RATHER THAN BETTER, AND COMMENTED THAT IT IS OFTEN WISER TO LET OUTSIDE NON-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CARRY OUT THE ACTION.

5. THE MP'S SAID THEY REALIZED THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT GOVERNMENTS CAN DO. THEY ALSO ASKED WHY HMG IS NOT IN CONTACT WITH USG ON THIS ISSUE, TO WHICH JUDD REPLIED, "WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE ARE NOT?"

6. AFTER MP'S LEFT, JUDD INSTRUCTED LUCAS TO DO SOME THINKING ABOUT WHETHER AND HOW HMG SHOULD APPROACH THE SHAH ON THIS ISSUE.

7. LUCAS COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT HE THOUGHT THE MP'S WERE MISTAKEN IN ASSERTING THAT RECENTLY THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS WORSENERED IN IRAN, SINCE HE UNDERSTANDS IT HAS IMPROVED. LUCAS ALSO FEELS IT IS MISTAKEN TO ARGUE THAT THE BRITISH SHOULD MAINTAIN CLOSER OR OPEN CONTACT WITH "THE OPPOSITION" TO THE "BRITTLE" REGIMES IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA, SINCE THERE IS USUALLY NO LOYAL OPPOSITION OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY TYPE.

8. EMBASSY COMMENT: LUCAS IS AN INTELLECTUAL ORIENTALIST WHO DEMONSTRATED HIS OWN DEEP PERSONAL CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO FREE VICTOR DICK FROM IMPRISONMENT IN SOUTH
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YEMEN LAST YEAR. WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE ANY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OR EMBASSY TEHRAN WHICH WE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO LUCAS'S THINKING AS HE CARRIES OUT JUDD'S INSTRUCTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL REPRESSION, POLITICAL PRISONERS, ALLEGATIONS, STUDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON04937
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770102-0499
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770327/aaaaawzu.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 849ef0b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION DHA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 LONDON 2424, 77 LONDON 2985
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3010677
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FCO DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN WITH MP'S
TAGS: SHUM, IR, UK, AI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/849ef0b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009